

Deerlodge Valley (175,260 acres)



Figure 5. Deerlodge Valley Focus Area

One of several broad, intermountain valleys located in southwestern Montana, the north-flowing Clark Fork River bisects the Deerlodge Valley along an east-west axis. Cattle ranching and hay production are the chief agricultural activities. Native bunchgrasses occur on the valley foothills, which provide important elk and deer winter range and support other diverse nongame wildlife.

Landscape Characteristics

This subsection consists of an intermontane valley that formed in Tertiary sedimentary rocks and more recent stream deposits. Elevations range from 4,400 to 6,000 feet. Drainage density is moderate. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 11 to 16 inches, with about 20 percent falling as snow. The soil temperature and moisture regimes are frigid and aridic ustic. The primary natural disturbances are flooding and mass wasting. Another important natural biotic disturbance is beaver activity in riparian areas. Land use is predominantly agriculture, livestock grazing, and urban/suburban development. The breakdown for land stewardship in the Deerlodge Valley area is as follows:

U.S. Federal Agencies:	1,792 acres, or 1% of total area, which include:
BLM:	62 acres, or less than 0.1% of total area
NPS:	1,730 acres, or 0.9% of total area
State Agencies:	14,023 acres, or 8% of total area
Private:	159,445 acres, or 91% of total area

Associated Habitats

Habitat	Habitat Tier	Percentage of Area
Very Low Cover Grasslands	I	2.00
Mixed Barren Sites	III	2.14
Altered Herbaceous	II	3.22
Mixed Xeric Shrubs	I	4.70
Sagebrush	I	4.96
Moderate/High Cover Grasslands	I	5.37
Wetland and Riparian	I	6.14
Agricultural Lands - Irrigated	III	6.99
Mixed Mesic Shrubs	II	7.18
Low/Moderate Cover Grasslands	I	51.73

Note: A total of 94.42% of the Deerlodge Valley area is represented; 5.58% is made up of a combination of other habitat types.

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

There are a total of 259 terrestrial vertebrate species that are found within the Deerlodge Valley Focus Area. Tier I species are listed below. All associations can be found in Table 11.

Amphibians: Western Toad and Northern Leopard Frog

Birds: Common Loon, Trumpeter Swan, Harlequin Duck, Bald Eagle, Long-billed Curlew, and Black Tern

Mammals: Townsend's Big-eared Bat and Canada Lynx

Conservation Concerns & Strategies

Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies
Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, especially as a result of human population growth	Support conservation easements by conservation organizations or public agencies
	Support state/federal tax incentives that discourage habitat fragmentation
	Promote further development of county ordinances that help plan for and manage development
Invasive and exotic plant species	Participate in partnerships to develop and implement weed control strategies

Range or forest management practices	Support government and private conservation activities that encourage and support sustainable land management practices (example; rest and rotation schedules)
Streamside residential development	Develop statewide riparian best management principles

References

The Nature Conservancy. 2000. Middle Rockies-Blue Mountains Ecoregional Conservation Plan. Prepared by the Middle Rockies-Blue Mountains Planning Team. 58 pp. + appendices.